

FEB 7 1919

THE ENGLISH LEAFLET

THE NEW ENGLAND
ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

ORGANIZED FEBRUARY 28, 1901

WALTER S. HINCHMAN, PRESIDENT

A. B. DE MILLE, SEC'Y AND TREAS.

SAMUEL THURBER, EDITOR

THE ENGLISH LEAFLET is published by the New England Association of Teachers of English, every month except July, August and September. Subscription price, One Dollar. Secretary-Treasurer, A. B. De Mille, Milton, Mass. Editor, Samuel Thurber, 59 North Street, Newtonville, Mass.

VOL. XIX

FEBRUARY, 1919

NUMBER 160

PREPARING SENIORS FOR PALGRAVE

ADA L. DAVIS

Deering High School, Portland, Maine

The teaching of lyric poetry may seem at first as daring a venture as sailing forth on a mystic sea without chart or compass. What shall we teach? Lyrics are so elusive; they gleam with opalescent light; their beauty depends on the seeing eye, the ear already attuned to melody. The lyric is "the cry of the heart," "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling." Shall we find in the lyric anything more than a recognition of the experiences of our own souls? If this is the cry of life, what interpretation is possible to young eyes looking out on life so joyfully? Here is found no stirring narrative in which the young delight; this appeal to the emotions will be viewed distrustfully. Dare we attempt the teaching of lyric poetry at all?

The poet has a message of great moment which he presents to us in rare and beautiful language. It would be a pity never to know the charm of singing phrase and golden numbers. We may not hope to teach the lyric with the pedantic thoroughness that is possible in narrative verse with its neatly articulated sections. The guiding hand must bear a light touch; we must invite, not command.

Seniors already know something of poetic literature: the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare, the stirring narrative verse of Macaulay, Coleridge's ballad with its imaginative appeal, and Tennyson's beautiful Idylls. In the study of these lyrics, however, a special preparation seems advisable before inviting our pupils to enter this garden of verse and cull such flowers of poesie as may delight.

We may first arrange a series of talks on the nature of poetry and its elements. Let every student form some reply to the question, "What is poetry?" Lead students to see that poetry is both a spirit and a form; it is the language of emotion; it is beautiful and imaginative thought expressed in beautiful language. As to elements, we may consider five: rhythm, the beat or stress; meter, the measure of the foot or line; alliteration, a repetition of similar sounds at the beginning of emphatic syllables; rhyme, a similarity of sounds at the end of lines; and tone-color, a correspondence between the sentiment expressed and the sounds employed. Of these elements, rhythm is most necessary to poetic language, so let that be the subject of our first talk.

Rhythm plays an important part in the enjoyment of poetry. All human beings respond to rhythmic beat or cadence. A person finds his hands and feet keeping time to the beat of spirited music. Rhythmic lines are most easily remembered, witness the poetry of early races whose language was perpetuated by word of mouth. Children love to hear poetry read, even if they do not understand the meaning. Verse is like music, in that it is written not for the eye, but for the ear.

Even inanimate objects, if in key with a musical instrument, send forth a sound in response to rhythm. The measured tramp of soldiery will cause a bridge to fall, when the same army, not in step, will have no effect on the solid masonry. It was a belief of the ancients that the planets made music as they turned in the heavens.

Poets use various rhythms to suggest various ideas to their readers, as the sweep of the wind, the beat of a horse's hoofs, the moan of the sea, the bubble of a caldron, or the dancing step of a child.

Besides the effect of rhythmic sound, poetry must bring us beautiful or unusual expression of thought. Prose suffices if it is clear and exact, but poetry must be the product of imagination. Poetry must bring us thoughts in a new and wonderful guise. We must see the beauty in a "host of golden daffodils, fluttering and dancing in the breeze." With Wordsworth, our hearts "leap up" when we behold a rainbow in the sky. Poetry teaches us to see beauty in a gray dawn as well as in the gold and purple sunset; loveliness in the snow that ridges the twigs "inch deep with pearl;" grandeur in the solitary forest primeval. The poet makes us see the beauty of November rain on the

city streets as well as the sweetness of "a day so cool, so calm, so bright, the bridal of the earth and sky." The poet, then, is a great teacher. The true elements of rhythm and imagination may be found in the works of those whom we regard only as prose writers. Such lines as the following from George Eliot, though written as prose, are in truth poetry: "In the old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the City of Destruction. We see no white-winged angels now, and yet men are led away from threatening destruction. A hand is put into theirs which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land so that they look no more backward, and the hand may be a little child's."

We study meter for three reasons: to aid in reading aloud; to cultivate a sense of rhythm; to realize the poet's intent. We shall need to know the trochee, the iambus, the dactyl, the anapest, the spondee, and possibly the amphibrach and the amphimacer. It is amusing to classify the names of the class members under these heads, or to apply the measures to school songs and especially to school yells. To some, it is a novel thought that the poet selects his meter to express his mood: trochees trip from long to short; iambics march in dignified verse; the slow spondee stalks, a strong foot; dactyls denote sprightliness, bounding along; anapests give the effect of swiftiness, as the gallop of horses or the flow of water. When High School pupils indulge in verse, they generally select a well-known poem to parody, regardless of whether the meter suits the mood. This matter of meter, then, will come with new force.

Alliteration deserves but a casual mention. It belongs, more or less, to a bygone age when literature was carried by scop and gleeman, and perpetuated by word of mouth. It was a useful device to aid the memory, and various examples may be recalled from poetry that emulates an older time, as in "The Ancient Mariner."

Rhyme constitutes all there is of poetry to most youthful readers. It amazes them to find that the jingle of rhyming verse is not necessary to good poetry, but is used only as an ornament or as a means of uniting lines together into a stanza. It is an ornament, however, that no young people and few teachers would renounce. At this time it is advisable to present a few stanza forms, showing these groups of lines bound together by a certain unity of thought and by definite arrangement of end rhymes.

Tone-color may be an imitation of sounds as *cackle*,

whistle, whizz, rumble, bubble, or it may be an indefinite suggestion of certain feelings. The first is simple enough for all to understand; the second is intelligible, perhaps, only to a few. Selections for illustration are best chosen from poems with which students are already familiar.

While these talks are going on, the class is encouraged to begin a collection of poems chosen solely as a matter of personal liking. Credits are offered for poems committed to memory, preferably selected from Palgrave. Favorite modern poems may be accepted, if worthy, as "In Flanders Fields," "The Rendezvous with Death," or "The Spires of Oxford." Collect quotations concerning poets and poetry. Memorize much. Read aloud daily.

In the notebooks may be placed for reference the following:

Definition: A Lyric is a poem that voices personal feeling, sentiment, or emotion.

Requirements: It must be sincere and imaginative; it must concern inner feeling, not outward events; as the name *lyric* implies, it may be suitable for a musical setting, although it is not necessary that the lyric be actually sung.

Kinds: *Song*, a simple, natural expression.

Ode, an expression of intense feeling with an elaborate structure.

Elegy, an expression of grief, mingled with reflections on mortality

Sonnet, a poem complete in fourteen lines with strict rules of structure.

Dramatic Lyric, a poem in which a single character speaks to the reader and suggests pictures or deeds.

With the "Golden Treasury" in the hands of our students, we may choose for first readings in Book I those lyrics that suggest a story, for although the lyric is in no sense narrative, it is "the soul of a story." Let us choose, then "Age and Youth" (9), "Under the Greenwood Tree" (10), "Advice to a Girl" (26), "An Honest Autolycus" (36), "Blow, Thou Winter Wind" (56), and "A Wish" (83).

In the "Honest Autolycus," we see the shrewd, sharp-eyed vender, wise because of his experiences, waiting in the open market with his cheap knickknacks,—only a penny-worth. He offers them to the fine lady whose disdainful glance refuses to buy. She is young, beautiful, and scornful of his trash, for she wears real jewels. He wisely rebukes her

for looking for values only, and freely gives her a pearl of wisdom.

A bit of English history emphasizes the pathos of the "Wish"; the Shakespearean lyrics are explained by the plays from which they are taken. Rhythm, meter, tone-color are all interesting as they help to express the writer's feelings.

A study of sonnet forms in connection with Book I may bring unexpected results. The sonnet has all the fascination of a puzzle. Its few lines with their exacting requirements challenge the ingenuity of the practical and the poetical. Some will be sure to try their skill at its structure, perhaps with surprisingly good success. It is not to be expected that so short a flight will put the adventurous ones in complete control of the good steed Pegasus, but it may be hoped that the exhilaration of the first experience may lead to another trip.

The serious study in Book II centers about the ode. A talk about Pindar and the Greek festival songs will prove of interest, as will descriptions of the beautiful religious rites, in which the three arts of music, poetry, and dancing united their expression.

The "Song for St. Cecilia's Day" should be learned by all for its sonorous lines and tone-color. This may be followed by a study of the picturesque "Alexander's Feast." This ode will be especially interesting to the musicians of the class if they are told of Handel's musical setting. For memorizing, Herrick's dainty rhymes are popular and other favorites are "A Happy Life," "The Noble Nature," "The Vision," and Jonson's lovely song "To Celia."

In Book III we find "the flowering of English poetry in song." Here we shall listen to the voice of Robert Burns singing the melodies of Scotland. The song is itself the purest form of lyric, in which words and music cannot be thought of, one without the other. Happy the class that hears these songs read by one of Scottish blood and accent; a Burns program with the Victor records will prove a delightful occasion. Do not forget to turn to "Abbotsford" and read again what Scott told Irving about the songs of Burns.

The present interest in patriotic verse will make it advisable to compare such poems as "Rule Britannia," and "How Sleep the Brave" with favorite selections from the modern "Treasury of War Poetry."

William Wordsworth is regarded by Palgrave as the

typical poet of the years 1800-1850. His is a name always connected with nature poetry. To the experiences of simple, rural life Wordsworth turned when he wished to find subjects of truest human interest; thus the poet taught the highest meaning of democracy, which is based on the worth of every human soul, no matter how humble its surroundings.

It will not be surprising if pupils prefer the gay "Hunting Song" of Scott or the "Sea Song" of Cunningham to the delicate beauty of Wordsworth's lines. A word of suggestion may accomplish more than dogmatic rule, and a chance to browse may do much to develop a love for the best.

These suggestions have been used with classes of High School seniors not planning for a college career. They are invited to read much poetry; they learn ten or more poems, and they begin a collection of favorite verse. As I remember, the *Golden Treasury* is the only text book which pupils have desired to buy for themselves, and therefore I am encouraged to believe that young people may be led to appreciate and actually read, of their own accord, the finest Lyric Poetry in our language.

ACT PROMPTLY

The National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English meets in New York on February 22d. Suggestions from members of the English Association are desired by the delegates representing the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (our association is not otherwise represented). They may be sent to Mr. George H. Browne, The Browne and Nichols School, Cambridge; to Mr. Alfred M. Hitchcock, 203 Sigourney Street, Hartford, Ct.; or to Prof. Henry G. Pearson, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Special meetings of Private Schools and of the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools may be called on the second and the third Saturdays in February.

Bolenius'
Everyday English Composition

Has Been Adopted by

ST. LOUIS

For use in 7th and 8th grades and
junior high schools.

This book is refreshing in its originality,
adaptable in its method and effective in its
practice.

AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

New York Cincinnati Chicago Boston Atlanta

**USE THESE FAVORITES IN
YOUR CLASSES**

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

By **BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS**

COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

By **HENRY W. HOLMES** and **OSCAR C. GALLAGHER**

PRACTICAL GRAMMAR and COMPOSITION

By **THOMAS WOOD**

WRITE TO

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

35 WEST 32nd STREET - - NEW YORK

These are Appleton Books

For Classics in English Composition

World War Issues and Ideals

By MORRIS EDMUND SPEARE and WALTER BLAKE MORRIS
Of the Department of English in the United States Naval Academy

Readings in contemporary history and literature by forty-two of the most distinguished living men in Belgium, France, England, America, Italy, and Germany. It is not pre-eminently a book of American ideals but is international in scope.

Well adapted to freshman English in colleges, since the selections afford excellent literary examples of prose forms and style. Moreover, it lends itself well to any form of reading and study connected with the war, whether in the classroom or in the home.

With reconstruction problems now at the fore, the section on the New Europe and a Lasting Peace is of special interest.

xi+461 pages, \$1.40



GINN AND COMPANY

15 Ashburton Place - - BOSTON

For a Four-Year Course

HITCHCOCK'S COMPOSITION

and RHETORIC

By ALFRED M. HITCHCOCK of the Hartford Public High School. 375 pages. 12mo. \$1.28.

A. S. ROBERTS, St. George's School, Newport, R.I.:—It preserves the best qualities of Mr. Hitchcock's other books, a minimum of theory with well-chosen exercises by means of which the pupil can arrive at a sound understanding of principles, and form necessary habits in writing.

THE NATION:—The method is sound, the arrangement clear and helpful, and the chapters on argumentation and letter writing are of special excellence.

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

19 West 44th Street
NEW YORK

6 Park Street
BOSTON

2451 Prairie Avenue
CHICAGO